

# Trailblazer

UNCG Bryan School alumna blazes trail for African American business students – like her daughter



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“You will go to college” are words that UNC Greensboro Bryan School of Business and Economics alumna Loretta Shaw Helton '81 (Business Education)

heard growing up in Durham, North Carolina. Raised in the cotton and tobacco fields of South Carolina, her parents weren't afforded the opportunity. When her brother tragically passed away in an automobile accident before he could complete his degree, she would be the first in her family.

UNCG wasn't on Loretta's list, but when a high school counselor informed her the school was looking to expand its African American enrollment and asked her to apply, she did.

“I haven't regretted that decision once – I haven't looked back,” she said.

Loretta was one of approximately 20 students recruited and accepted from predominantly African American high schools in North Carolina to what would eventually become the Bryan School. She majored in business education – a major no longer offered at the School – with the goal of becoming a school principal.

Back in '77, though, she wasn't thinking about the fact that her college experience would help blaze the trail for future African American college students at UNCG. She didn't know that by Fall 2023, non-white students would make up more than half of the Bryan School's population.

“My thoughts were more centered on enjoying school and graduating on time,” she said. “I had a goal in mind to achieve the college degree which my parents weren't afforded and my brother couldn't complete.”

Loretta thrived on campus. She lived in Winfield Dorm, started UNCG's chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and developed friendships that are still maintained today. Her skin tone only came into play in the classroom. From 1977 to 1981, Helton experienced many moments of being the only brown person in class, and professors asked her to present

her viewpoint of the issues as an African American person.

“I was raised to speak my mind and know that my thoughts mattered, so UNCG and the Bryan School helped me build on that,” she said.

Loretta also credits the Bryan School for helping her develop an eye for communications, business and technology – three key components of her future professional life. She obtained her master's degree in business education from North Carolina Central University, but her goal of becoming a principal changed after she was recruited by IBM in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park working in Information Technology. She's since worked with Duke University, the State of Louisiana and is currently with Legal and General America as the Team Lead for their System Administrators and Engineers.

Loretta is married and the parent of three adult children, all of whom have college degrees.



## Like Mother, Like Daughter

“You will go to college.” Loretta passed those familiar words on to her daughter, Chloe' Love Helton '17 (Business Administration) nearly 36 years later. The question was – which one? After a campus tour, Chloe' knew it had to be UNCG.

“My sisters and I will tell you our mom is our superhero,” she said. “She always talked

about how much she learned at UNCG, so being able to follow in her footsteps that closely is an honor.”

The parallels between Chloe' and her mother's experiences are hard to miss. Like her mom, Chloe' was assigned to Winfield Dorm and chose the Bryan School, majoring in Business Administration. While at UNCG, Chloe' had an opportunity to be a student ambassador, Resident Advisor, intern at local businesses, study abroad for a semester in France, and participate in various leadership programs on campus.

“There were so many perspectives, cultures and experiences brought into the classroom, in part because of those students 40 years ago – because of students like my mom,” Chloe' said.

## Family Ties

Loretta currently resides in Washington, DC and spends her time on the road with her husband, who is a Methodist Bishop. Chloe' works in content marketing at a digital marketing firm in Charlotte. Despite their physical distance, the Helton women pay a visit to campus every now and then.

“We constantly reflect on the changes that have occurred over the course of the 40 years since I stepped on campus – so many changes that helped forged a wonderful experience for my daughter and me,” Loretta said. “I see better things in store for future Bryan School generations.”

One of Loretta's favorite moments at UNCG is her bringing Chloe' to UNCG as an infant and showing her the UNCG Alumni Walk where she donated a brick.

“When I pointed out my brick to Chloe', I had no idea that one day I'd share another favorite moment with her – graduation day in 2017,” she said. “It's a very special feeling sharing the UNCG experience with my daughter.” ■